The Diamond From the Sky

By ROV L. McCARDELL

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CHAPTER XXVII. For Love and Money.

UT from the rickety old mansion, long gone to slattern shabbiness as a lodging house, came Detective Tom Blake in his guise of overgrown bootblack. He led the dazed and bewildered Esther by the wrist and following after her, forgetting in his excitement the hurts he had sustained, came the devoted Quabba.

Whimpering inquiries unheeded by Esther as to whether she had been hurt and divided between his worry over his young mistress and the frightened chatter of Clarence, the monkey, who clung desperately to him, Quabba submitted to being hustled after Esther into the waiting taxicab, which drove off as though at command, leaving the bootblack upon the scene.

From the dark and dingy interior of the lodging house came a cloud of dust, raised by the falling of the rickety old stairway and landing in the battle with Blair.

The blowzy and gin sodden landlady, roused now to an acute perception of the trouble to come from the police, stood in the doorway screaming as the idle and shabby population of that mean part of Richmond came flocking to the scene, wondering if it were murder, robbery or both.

Blake in his bootblack guise mingled to see if Blair would be brought out from the interior wreckage, living or that you are mistaken?" dead. At the arrival of the police wagon the screaming landlady slammed the door and barred it.

Inside, among the wreckage of the fallen statrease and landing, Blair, revived from the stunning effects of his fall, pulled himself to his veet, rejoicing that beyond a few bruises he was not injured. He scrambled over the debris and down the cellar steps and over the dirty littered back yards and away, while yet the hysterical landlady held the fort against the battering police outside.

The house had been a fine mansion in its day, and the stout old door held stanchly. But at last it gave way and in poured the police, who could gain no information from the screaming. scratching harridan, who endeavored to bar their way, and so they promptly laid hands on the landlady and such of her lodgers as had not fled, and haled them out to the patrol wagon and bore them off.

Blake, idling with the crowd, did not disclose himself, but, satisfied that Blair had made good his escape and that no notoriety or arrests would stir up matters that Blake, as agent of Arthur, desired to remain quiescent, he returned, smiling inscrutably, to his

In a back street the fleeing Blair, noting a standing automobile, whose driver was stooping over by its front wheel finishing pumping up a tire, bowled over the startled chauffeur and drove off in the commandeered car at breakneck speed. He drew his hat down over his eyes and bent low over the wheel as, halfway to Mrs. Randolph's house, he flashed past the taxicab containing Esther and Quabba.

Halting his car in front of Mrs. Randolph's mansion, Blair hastily donned a linen automobile coat and a driver's cap with goggles on the visor lying in

Hiding his own hat and dust covered coat under the seat cushion and wearing the auto togs, he was the first person to greet Esther and Quabba when their taxicab drew up and they alighted.

The taxi driver, evidently in the pay and at the orders of Detective Blake, drove away without a word, and despite the indignant protests of both Esther and Quabba, Blair outfaced them with his declaration that he was innocent of any lodging house encounter, but on the contrary and been riding and

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day in the car he had borrowed from a

Mrs. Randolph, meeting the excited group in her doorway, promptly fell into "a state of nerves" at the problem that confronted her when the indignant Quabba and the more than indignant Esther breathlessly presented their charges of brutal treachery and



"I want the diamond from the sky!"

perfidy against Blair, who still insistently proclaimed his innocence with an air of half indignation, half puzzled

say!" moaned Mrs. Randolph. "But | panion and cousin, Blair Stanley, rightful with the throng as a spectator, waiting as for accusing Blair of such dreadful male heir of Stanley. In stealing the diathings, hasn't the poor boy told you

> Seeing that Mrs. Randolph was utterly unable to believe Blair guilty of his despicable actions and utterly astounded at the cool effrontery of Blair and his brazen denials, Esther dismissed her one faithful, loyal friend and gave him directions to proceed to Los Angeles with part of the money that had so mysteriously come into her hands.

> "I will follow you," whispered Esther. "I will not stay in this house, where Mrs. Randolph, as Blair's cousin. cannot or will not see how villainous and despicable he is.'

> Esther took train to Los Angeles a week after Quabba had departed for the west, taking with him the pony and piano cart, of which he was inordinately proud, together with Clarence, his simian collector of external

> Quabba had hardly superintended the unloading of his traveling outfit from the express car and secured lodging for himself when Esther arrived in Los Angeles also,

> Quabba, whose tastes were bohemian if not vagrom, permitted himself a change of costume so far as to take out his earrings and don a straw hat, the very shape and feel of which he detested, and immediately sought for John Powell.

Under this name Arthur Stanley was a leading figure in Los Angeles, and Quabba soon found himself at the offices of the Good Hope Oil company.

Here a supercilious office boy and a condescending telephone girl reluctantly informed the strange looking inquirer that Mr. John Powell had gone far off into the distant Sierras to acquire some mines. It would seem that John Powell, the new oil millionaire, was extensively branching out into other industrial investments.

It was this same information, but more agreeably given, that was vouchsafed to Blair when he called later in the day at the suggestion of Vivian Marston when Blair had joined that vivacious lady, who had married him in haste for the diamond and parted from him in equal celerity at the loss

From the beginning Vivian made their relative positions clear to Blair. "You are a very dear boy," she said, and there is a refreshing air of youthfulness about your wicked ways. But you are so delightfully incapable of doing the right thing when there is a

wrong thing to do at the same time that I cannot be too closely concerned with you in the matters we have in "I want the diamond from the sky! I don't care where it is or who has it I would sell my soul for it, and I

would not care how many lives stood

in the way of my desire; no, not even

if your life was one of them, my dear Blair's eyes glittered murderously. "You go too far with me, Vivian!" he panted, "No one knows better than you that there isn't anything I wouldn't

dare for you!" Vivian seated herself on the edge of the table, still keeping Blair at his distance with a significant gesture of calm earnestness.

"That is just the trouble," she answered coolly. "There isn't anything you would not dare for me or for anything else you desire-Esther Harding,

for instance." Blair winced. "Ah," continued Vivian mockingly, "I see that shot went home, and it was a chance one. You dare to love me, and you dare to love the say and rimid grasy girl.

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SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAP.

A feud has existed between Colonel Arthur Stanley and his cousin, Judge Lamar Stanley, over an heirloom, the diamond from the sky, found in a fallen meteor by an ancestor. Also, the succession to the Stanley earldom in England may come to an American. When a daughter is born to the colonel and the mother dies, the colonel buys a gypsy boy and substitutes him. Three years later the gypsy mother, having had no part in this bargain, steals the girl, being reared in secret, and leaves her son undetected as the heir. The gypsy has obtained possession of the diamond from the sky, and a document with the Stanley secret. When Esther is grown a beautiful young girl, Hagar, now gypsy queen, returns to Virginia with her. Dr. Lee, the late Colonel Stanley's friend, adopts Esther, but demands that Hagar turn over to him the diamond from the sky. Arthur Stanley, son of Hagar, falls "I am sure I do not know what to in love with Esther and so does his commond Blair causes the death of the doctor and tries later to put the blame on

Arthur, who takes the diamond from him. The sheriff attempts to take Arthur into custody, but he eludes his pursuers and joins Hagar, who reveals his identity and upbraids him for his wild life. Needing money, he pawns the diamond in Rich-At a ball, at which a supposed New York belle, Vivian Marston, is the guest of honor, Arthur and Blair find the diamond on the visitor. She is an adventuress who has borrowed it.

Luke Lovell, Hagar's gypsy guard, steals the diamond, and to avoid detection drops it into a mail box. Arthur leaves Richmond and goes to the west. The diamond passes into a mall bag, picked up by Quabba, organ grinder. Quabba's monkey steals the diamond. Hagar takes, Esther to Stanley hall.

Tom Blake, a detective of Richmond, who is hired by Hagar, produces finger prints convicting Blair. Hagar proposes silence to Mrs. Stanley as the price of Hagar's and Esther's being received in Fairfax society. Blair strikes down Hagar and steals the finger prints, 'caving the gypsy demented. The diamond is found by a negro boy and is taken by a tramp. The latter is murdered by Hun; It is stolen just as a slumming part; enters Hung Li's den. Hagar is again with Esther among the gypsies. Marmaduke Smythe, hawyer, arrives to announce Arthur is heir to the decessed Earl of Stanley. Let ning Arthur is a fuglive seeks Blair instead. To win Wylan, Disteals the diamond, later murating he and leaving for the west. Their train robbed, Vivlan losing the diamond, while a slain train robber drops in the descri The \$100,000 he stole is found by Arthur now known as John Powell, gheep herder Vivian deserts Dlair, telling him he mus regain the diamon! for her. Luke Love! driven from the camp after learning H. gar's secret, leaves to seek Dlair. Haga is under treatment and Esther is Richmond society, protege of Mrs. Stanley, who suspects her real name, and or Mrs. Randolph. Abe Bloom, gambler, who knows Blair's mult, covers the d'amons and calls it the price of his secrecy. Blai: will not list a to Lovell, and Arthur alsinsista on his silence. Blair returns to Richmond and, instigated by his mother, pays unwelcome court to Esther, Mrs. Stanley asserting Vivian had been married before. The diamond is picked up by an Indian woman. Dr. Lee, Arthur learns, died of heart disease. Becoming very rich he buys Stanley hall, sold at auction, through Blake, and also provides for Hagar and has money left secretly in Esther's room. Luke Lovell buys the diamond from the squaw, but loses it in a fight on Santa Barbara bay, the gem sinking. At the auction Smythe buys a mounted deer head. Vivian, desiring aid to ensnare Arthur, senss for Blair. The latter is worsted in an attempt to take the Stanley document from Esther, defended by Blake and Quabba.

Well, if you have double lives why may we not have double loves? Now, don't scowl, Blair, my dear. You can't frighten me for one moment. Physically you are stronger than I am, and I have no doubt if you had me alone some place you might strangle me, but you could not frighten me.

"Now listen," continued Vivian. "You know how the desire for the diamond obsessed you when you saw it in the hands of the old doctor whom you murdered for it. I do not care if this diamond rightfully belongs to you or whether it rightfully belongs to Arthur Stanley, and I do not care whether your suspicions as to his being in your way wrongfully are correct or are mistaken.

"I only know that Arthur Stanley is known out here as John Powell, and I only know that John Powell has many millions and is making more. You cannot expose him, because, after all, he knows he is not guilty of the murder of Dr. Lee, and he knows you are. That he has tacitly accepted the guilt by his flight from Virginia and living here under a false name does not concern me. I only know that you hate him and that he is fond of you. In the minds of those who knew him in Virginia he is believed to be a murderer,

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and he lets this onus rest on his name, or, rather, the name he wore back there, for your sake.

"If the diamond rightfully belongs to Arthur Stanley I will marry him for it, even as I married you for it, and if you say a word I will send you to the gallows. As desperate as you are, my dear Blair, I can see you do not wish to go to the gallows. You do not wish even to be charged and tried and imprisoned for the murder you know you are guilty of, although you told Arthur that Dr. Lee died from excitement when you broke into his house to get the diamond.

"If you are the rightful heir to the diamond and the earldom all well and good. I want the diamond, and I would dearly love to be Lady Stanley of Stanley castle, Warwickshire. But your very recklessness has placed you in your present position.

"You can claim nothing. So if you will think it over you will see that, while we had better work together, it must not be as man and wife. You are apt to venture too rashly, and I cannot be identified with you.

"The diamond from the sky has disappeared, but John Powell's millions are very tangible. No matter what I do to gain the money or the diamond you must not interfere. If all goes well we may gain the diamond, the earldom and John Powell's money together. We hold Arthur Stanley's secret, and that is a good advantage at

"Now you go and find him. He is at these mines he has just bought. He will be as glad to see you as he was in Richmond. He does not know your true character as I do. He will make you his manager or partner, for he is generous and will be glad to have his kinsman, if you are his kinsman, and boyhood comrade with him.

"On my part I will interject myself into his affairs either with your aid or without. We will work together, and I promise you that in the end if all goes well we will have our desires." CHAPTER XXVIII.

Off to Seek Her Love.

and Blair departed for the mines in an automobile to throw himself into Arthur's way.

Quabba, passing the hotel where Blair and Vivian had their meeting, got a glimpse of them parting in the street. He telephoned to Esther where she was stopping, and Esther resolved to start at once to find Arthur before Blair reached him.

Again Esther thought it best that she go alone. But Quabba, parted with at the depot, took the next train after Esther, first leaving Clarence, the monkey, and the pony and the other equipment in good hands.

(Continued on Third Page)

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